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Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Letter dated 22 January 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the United States Mission to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to attach hereto the text of Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke's address to the African Group, given on 17 January 2001 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) James B. **Cunningham**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 22 January 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the United States Mission to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Address to the African Group by Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke, United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium, 17 January 2001

Thank you so much, Ambassador, and thank you for this wonderful opportunity to say "Good-bye" to my friends in the African Group and so many other Ambassadors and other friends who have come here today -- and my staff who I think was ordered to come here. I want to thank you, Mr. Ambassador and Ambassador Kpostra, as representative of the President of the OAU, for giving me this opportunity, and I want to also join you in thanking the man you correctly call "the chief," my chief, Arthur Mbanefo, my friend, my chief, for that wonderful reception last night. I cannot think of any other Ambassador in the UN who I would rather have had give the reception than Arthur Mbanefo, a great Ambassador, a great friend, and a representative of a great country. Thank you so much.

This is the only regional group I will speak to and it is true, as Ambassador Juwayeyi, said that it is sort of half our suggestion and half OAU's invitation, but I wanted to speak to Africa because I pledged in my confirmation hearings a year and a half ago that Africa would be our priority. And I wanted to offer you something of a report at the end of the mission on what we've done, what I think we've learned and a few ideas. And I promise that in keeping with my reputation I will make some provocative suggestions during the course of the next few minutes.

I want to begin, however, by thanking you for your friendship, your advice, and your encouragement. Our commitment to our unfinished agenda remains and as a private citizen I will continue to be deeply involved in African affairs and African issues. We have two days left and my last official meeting at the UN will be an open meeting of the Security Council on HIV/AIDS and on peacekeeping, and I hope that many of you will be able to join us. I intend to speak very frankly in that meeting about what I think is a continuing shortfall on the part of the UN and what it is doing to combat AIDS, particularly in its own troops in the peacekeeping field.

So, leaving AIDS aside for the public meeting the day after tomorrow, let me talk about other issues relating to Africa. Let me start by making three simple basic, inter-related points.

Africa matters.

The UN matters.

And the US position in support of both the institution of the UN and in support of Africa has been greatly strengthened in the last two years.

In regard to Africa, specifically, I have often heard the charges of a double standard. I understand where they come from. Let me say clearly that, as far as I am concerned at least, the double standard does not exist.

I came to New York with three major stated priorities: reform of the UN's scale of assessments and reform of the institution as a whole, the Balkans, and Africa. We will discuss the Balkans tomorrow in the Security Council and on the scale of assessments, the parameters of our effort were established by the need to safeguard the UN by achieving essential reforms.

In Africa, however, I needed to learn before I could act and the people in this room and others, especially including our great Secretary General Kofi Annan, were among my best teachers. You introduced me to the complexities of your countries, taught me to differentiate between the individual characteristics of countries which too few people in America know on an individual basis. And you promised me that if I made a sustained effort you would support me.

When I announced that my first major trip would be to Africa - although there were two short prior trips, one to East Timor and one to the Balkans - you correctly came to me and said -- when I announced first that it would be a "learn and listen trip"-- the Ambassadors from SADC came to me and said that's not good enough. I can't just go to learn and listen I have to go to do something. You were right and I agreed on the spot to change the type of mission. I was concerned that if I went on an action trip before I knew anything about the area you - the Ambassadors in the room- would say it was American arrogance. So I was trying to go as a student first but when you told me to go first as an activist, I listened to you and I did what you told me to do, which was not to go merely to listen, which is what I had done in other parts of the world. You opened doors throughout the African continent and we went to ten countries on that first trip, Kati and myself. And I'm deeply grateful for your hospitality and I apologize to those countries that asked me to come and to which I have yet had the occasion to visit. You brought me face-to-face with the individual crises and challenges that you deal with on a daily basis and finally you made clear the faith and hope that the African people put into the United Nations and the United States.

Our first stop was Mali and our second stop was Angola. The contrast could not have been more clear. In Mali, where I was greeted by my friend Moctar Ouane and his president, President Konare, we saw a thriving political structure -- despite poverty -- and admirable progress. But in Angola, one of the most difficult situations I have ever seen, perhaps the worst country I have ever been in in terms of the situation of the people I saw what you're all familiar with -- a country at war with itself since 1961 despite three major peace processes, five UN operations and billions of dollars in humanitarian aid, people who continue to suffer, the highest infant mortality rate in the world and all this in a country that supplies our country with 7 per cent of its oil per day and which receives billions of dollars in foreign revenue.

As the Bishops of Angola noted in their pastoral letter, it is the people who suffer when oil and diamonds fuel a conflict over power. Superpowers have turned that beautiful country into a Cold War battleground and with the end of the Cold War and an overdue and belated but welcome shift in American policy away from playing games with Savimbi the situation had the opportunity to improve but it's still a terrible situation. I saw first hand some of the 2 1/2 million internal refugees in Angola who fall outside the purview of the UNHCR. And it was that trip in Angola, more than anything else, that fueled our non-stop campaign to get the UNCHR to take on responsibilities for internal refugees, so-called IDPs, and I urge you, my friends in this room, not to let go of this issue. I've talked to the new head of the UNHCR, Prime Minister Lubbers about this. He is seized with the issue, Secretary Annan is seized with the issue but I find it disgraceful that members of other bureaucracies come to me and argue about whose fault it is or whose responsibility it is. Let them get together and designate a lead agency for internal refugees in each country. In most cases it should be the UNHCR, but if it isn't let it be somebody else. Don't just sit in New York and Geneva arguing about it and pointing fingers.

In Angola I saw a corrupt and inefficient government locked in combat with a reprehensible insurgency, neither of whom were putting the interests of the people of Angola first. I met a young journalist named Rafael Marques who had spent 38 days in prison for publishing an article attacking corruption in high places. I met a priest who had been tortured by the colonial secret service but who had nonetheless dedicated the rest of his life to the cause of social justice. And I met men and women of goodwill, from inside the government and in civil society, who wanted to work together for just and lasting peace.

Angola embodies the huge problems and the vast potential of your great continent and I think that it must not be forgotten. It is remarkable to me, given the dimensions of the problem in Angola, how often people, in outlining the world's problems, go through fifty problems and don't even mention Angola whose people have suffered as long, if not longer, than any other nation on earth.

From that trip, and the other eight countries that I visited, emerged many themes. The theme of concentrating on HIV/AIDS, the decision to devote January of last year to Africa when the US was in the Security Council Presidency, and many other things. In announcing January of last year, the first month of the new Millennium, as the "Month of Africa, we said we thought it would be the "Year of Africa" at the UN, and so it was. We spent time in Africa and while I would not pretend to you we solved its problems -- I'll get to that in a moment -- I think it can be said we kept the faith, we kept Africa on the front burner.

In the process, we expanded the traditional scope of the Security Council deliberations in an historic manner. When Vice President Gore, exactly a year ago, presided over the first health discussion in the history of the Security Council -- over vehement objections from many traditionalists, including some from my own staff -- we made and won the argument that the narrow definitions of security from 1945 no longer work in the modern world. I firmly believe - and I know that I have overwhelming support from my African friends here - that the UN cannot function as a series of islands with jurisdictional battles and turf battles. We need to work together and it was your support - the African members of the UN - Tunisia, Mali, Namibia, and your friends, Jamaica, among others, that convinced some of the more traditional countries on

the Security Council- particularly Russia and China- that they should have a health issue discussed and the meeting Friday will be the third meeting on health and as you all know we now have a Security Council Resolution on the issue too.

We recognize that Africans want a responsive, multi-disciplinary, and relevant Security Council. The states of Africa are the UN's most loyal and most demanding members. Your loyalty is justified. Your demands are also justified. We - the United States and you -the African Group- share within that framework several major policy goals. First, we must share the goal of making UN peacekeeping successful. This means well planned operations on the basis of realistic mandates. It means better trained, better equipped and better prepared contingents. It means a DPKO operation that is more responsive to the troop contributing countries. I am deeply distressed that the ACABQ killed the third Assistant Secretary General for Peacekeeping. I am puzzled by this because not only was it called for in the Brahimi Report, which all Chiefs of State had endorsed at the Millennium Summit, but because the ACABQ killed the Assistant Secretary General for Peacekeeping who was going to be from the troop contributing countries. I don't understand that. And some of the troop contributing countries, representatives in the ACABQ, pretending they were independent experts, which I assure you, they're not, voted against something in the interests of the troop contributing countries. So, we have Mr. Annabi, who we all respect and we have an American Mike Sheehan, who I hope you all get to know who is a superb American official who will help with Congress, But the third ASG was going to be from the troop contributing countries not from a member of the P-5 and not from a Security Council member necessarily. And I beg you get that third ASG back. You need it.

You can't have an organization which is the UN's defense ministry with only two deputies, and only 450 or 500 people running operations all over the world. You've got to separate military from police, logistics from operations, planning from personnel and you need deputies to do it and I am delighted we have an American deputy in DPKO now under Jean-Marie Guehenno but we need a real troop contributing country represented at the ASG level. So, I hope when I leave, those of you in the African Group will take the lead on doing that when it comes up in May.

Now, we share with you also the goal of expanding UN peacekeeping in Africa. Whether we are talking about the Congo, which I will return to in a minute because of the dramatic event of the last few hours, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Burundi, Somalia, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, Western Sahara, Angola, the Central African Republic or Somalia, we are sharing a basic belief: The UN needs to be there, in the absence of other forces and it must have the personnel, resources and mandates to be part of the solution. The failures of the past - and we all know who they are and where they are- must not be repeated. And yet they will be unless the UN equips the personnel better, works out clear communications systems, the best communications, and common missions. In Sierra Leone, each country understood its mandate mission differently. The Guineans, the Zambians, the Nigerians, the Indians, and others all had different understandings of their missions. The communications broke down. There were only three people in New York overseeing the operations in Sierra Leone. That cannot be repeated. We must learn from these mistakes. Nothing is more important and it matters more to Africa than anything else. And now that the peacekeeping scale of assessments has been reformed for the first time in history and - and I stress this to those of you who were not with me in Washington

last week to hear the Senate Foreign Relations Committee- now that we believe that the cap on peacekeeping that the US arbitrarily imposed on itself in 1994 - of 25% will be lifted it's time to give peacekeeping more support.

Now, as we speak here, General Powell is in his confirmation hearing. He will be asked this question. Senator Helms and his colleagues have indicated that if the new administration supports the lifting of a cap above 25% they will be responsive. Senator Biden will make that proposal in response to your generosity in taking our assessment down, we're going to rise to meet the gap, I hope, I believe and I will fight for it. But if this happens, take advantage of the opportunity. I beg you. Nothing is more important for the UN and within the UN. No one will be more affected by this than Africa.

Third, we share the goal of an important UN system, more responsive to the needs of its constituents. By constituents, I do not mean the entrenched civil servants in this building or in Geneva - I mean the people who should be on the receiving end of every taxpayer dollar, naira, or pound that is spent by the UN. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations must be strengthened and it must be expanded to reflect the reality that it is one of the busiest Ministries of Defense in the world. Under Secretary General Jean-Marie Guehenno who is - as I said a moment ago for all practical purposes - the Minister of Defense or the Minister of Peacekeeping of this great institution, we must help him to be more successful and I beg you again not to let third rank bureaucrats, people who don't even follow the instructions of some of the Ambassadors in this room, go into a closed meeting late at night and gut something as important as the Brahimi Report. He must have the means to carry out the mission and it matters more to Africa than any part of the world although it also matters in East Timor, in Lebanon, in Kosovo, in Bosnia, in Cyprus and elsewhere.

Fourth, we share the goal of bringing HIV/AIDS under control. This means more resources and more candor. We must put this issue at the forefront of our priorities and that's why we will end our efforts on Friday with that issue.

Fifth, we share the goal of development. I do not want to ignore development and I want to stress again to my friends particularly from the Caribbean group and elsewhere outside the peacekeeping area, that the US did not put peacekeeping forward en lieu of development but we increased the amount of money we gave to both issues at the same time. The UN was founded primarily as an organization to prevent the renewal of world conflict. In the narrow sense it has succeeded - we haven't had a world war in 55 years -- but the number of small wars has been enormous and, meanwhile, we have had to focus on an increasing development burden that was unforeseen or unimaginable to the founding fathers of the United Nations.

The UN has no means of addressing another problem which was not envisioned at all by the founding fathers of the UN and that is the problem of the systemic failure of states. This is one of the emerging security challenges, perhaps the emerging security challenge of the 21st century in Africa, the Balkans, and in parts of Asia.

Turning to specific issues, I want to speak briefly about Sierra Leone and the Congo. I regret to say that we end last year and begin this year without being able to say that either

problem has been resolved. The good news from Sierra Leone is that after a real crisis in the spring of last year it is stabilized, but the current situation in Sierra Leone is not an acceptable equilibrium. It's an equilibrium but it's not stable and I can assure you that it will either get a lot worse or it will get better. It will only get better if the UN takes an aggressive leadership role to break through. If we just leave it where it is, sooner or later it will explode.

Now, let me turn briefly to the crisis that is enveloping Kinshasa as we speak. As we enter this room this morning there is great confusion and uncertainty about what is happening in Kinshasa. We have conflicting reports and I will not bother to share with you the latest ones because I know nothing beyond what is available to you publicly. But I do want to make a general comment about the situation in the Congo. Certainly, no issue I've worked on in my 38 years in and out of the government has been as complicated or as difficult as the Congo. There are more players, more actors involved than any other issue, and it is simply indescribably difficult to deal with. Let me be clear on one point. The reported death of President Kabila may change the political landscape, indeed it will change the political landscape, but it will not alter the underlying reality that the Congo must undergo a peaceful democratic transition whether or not President Kabila has survived --and there are conflicting reports on that --the imperatives will remain the same. We must all work aggressively and pro-actively with the Congolese people to bring about a situation where arbitrary rule and division is replaced by inclusive and broad-based governance.

The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, which had been signed before I took this job, has always been a logical starting point for this process, and a rational and intelligent plan and I commend President Chiluba for his leadership in this regard. But let us be frank. Every signatory violated it without exception. If the agreement needs restructuring to be implemented so be it. But every time we talked about the slightest change everyone said "Oh no, you can't change any part of it because then every thing has to be changed" so we stuck to the Lusaka Plan and it wasn't implemented. What did it leave us with? A situation where the Secretary General of the United Nations, under his authority, under the Security Council Resolution, chose not to deploy the full 5,537 troops authorized. I believe that was the correct decision but it is one that many Africans have understandably lamented. Yet, unless the Lusaka signatories implemented their part of the withdrawal and demobilization plan, unless President Kabila and his government implemented the national dialogue how could the Secretary General send UN peacekeepers into an untenable situation where their lives would be at risk and where the UN has lost more people in peacekeeping than any other country in the world in the last 40 years. So, either the Lusaka Agreement has to be implemented or it has to be restructured. Whatever the situation in Kinshasa, the national dialogue must be revitalized. It is essential that the foreign forces who occupy large parts of the Congo halt their offensive action. They should not seek to take advantage of the events in Kinshasa to expand their presence. They should not play a role in the internal political process in Kinshasa. To these Congolese who took up arms we need to insure that they have a place at the table as well along side their countrymen who chose unarmed opposition.

The crisis in West Africa, I want to now turn to is also noteworthy. First of all Guinea was once a French colony, Sierra Leone a British colony and Liberia, as you all know, had a special relationship with the United States going back to its founding. Now all three are in

terrible shape and none of the so-called great powers of the last century should look back on pride on the roles that we have played there. Nonetheless we must deal with realities as they go forward even after examining their historical roots and that is equally true I might add of the Congo. Until the governments of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea can rule in the name of their people and in the interest of their people, armed insurrection seems inevitable. A third note-worthy aspect of the crisis in West Africa is the break down of the African tradition against military intervention in neighboring states. I can recall how the late great President Nyerere agonized over the decision to overthrow the brutal regime of Idi Amin in Uganda, how his firm belief in the rules of the OAU conflicted with his moral outrage at the excesses of that government. Ultimately, he intervened for moral reasons but only with the greatest reluctance. But today, as we look at the world and we look at Africa, we see that some African leaders practice intervention with limited restraint and invariably for wrong reasons, selfish reasons, reasons of personal gain or financial gain for themselves and their cronies while leaving corrupt and odious leaders in place.

Fourth, the international community must give all sides to these conflicts the opportunity to accept negotiated settlements, but if one side conclusively proves its bad faith, we must ask the UN to break out of impartiality. This was, incidentally, what happened in Bosnia. The UN appeared to be neutral between the oppressed and the oppressors, the aggressors and the victims of aggression much too long. The UN's failure in Bosnia was so complete that the United States had to lead a NATO intervention and push the UN aside in order to bring peace to Bosnia. I regret what happened although I played a central role in it and I did not regret that. I was the person who told the UN they could not send a representative to Dayton for the negotiations and I didn't like to do it because I love the UN as an institution and respect it. But they had blown their chance. Let us be honest about the situation in places like Sierra Leone. Let us be honest that if one side if the primary cause of the problem that we have to let the UN show its feelings.

In that regard, I am very pleased that recent resolutions last year on diamonds and other issues that put pressures on the countries we feel are most responsible for the situation. In Sierra Leone what we have is a fragile but democratically elected government trying to, against considerable odds, deal with one of the world's most repugnant insurgencies, the RUF. It's backed by a once proud and law-abiding member of the international community, a founder of the OAU. We're distressed that the present government there has abandoned these ideals. And we're distressed but we see no alternative but to put more pressure on the leadership which like Slobodan Milosevic in Yugoslavia has been the primary cause of this issue.

Let me now turn away from the crises in Congo, Angola, Sierra Leone to more general perspectives about the last 18 months in Africa.

President Rawlings of Ghana recently reminded us as he oversaw a wonderful and democratic election which has inspired the world that Africa needs to hear more speeches from leaders who voluntarily give up power. We have heard these worlds from many presidents in Africa -- Presidents Senghor and Diouf of Senegal, President Kaunda of Zambia, Presidents Nyerere and Mwinyi of Tanzania, President Masire of Botswana, and of course, from the revered President Mandela of South Africa. But still, such speeches are not universal in Africa and other

parts of the world. And I hope we can see the day when it won't be exceptional to note a peaceful, democratic transition as the one that has been so rightly praised in Ghana.

Let me deal now with the difficult question of why some African governments and the international community have not served the interests of the people of Africa as well as they might. This is a most difficult issue because all of you in this room, whether you agree with what I'm saying or not, care deeply about your countries and about the continent of Africa. But we must be honest that we can do better for the people of Africa.

One of the things I hear a lot here in the UN is the phrase, "African solutions for African problems." I myself use this phrase regularly in regard to issues like the Lusaka agreement. But sometimes, whatever its intent and meaning in Africa, sometimes the same phrase – African solutions for African problems -- is used by westerners as an excuse for inaction. They translate it as, "these are African problems so let the Africans fix them." I reject that firmly. We the outside world have a deep obligation and commitment to work with the leadership of Africa to deal with these issues. To me the phrase, "African solutions for African problems," means that we would never again see something like the Berlin conference of 1884 where foreigners carved up Africa for their own ends. But it also means that the Pan-African ideal will never be realized if it is based on African isolationism.

I believe that "African solutions for African problems" should mean that the international community will assist Africans who take leadership roles in continental issues. We have many examples of that: President Wade of Senegal, President Konare of Mali, President Chiluba of Zambia, President Chissano of Mozambique, President Bouteflika of Algeria, President Guelleh of Djibouti, President Mbeki of South Africa, President Bongo of Gabon, and President Obasanjo of Nigeria. And I tell you how deeply proud I am that I have come to know some -- most of these leaders -- as individuals and as friends. It is one of the great, great moments of my life to get to know people like President Konare, President Obasanjo, President Mbeki, President Masire, President Chissano and other of your great leaders, statesmen of world class, who lead Africa and should be a symbol to other countries.

But "African solutions for African problems," should not mean "give us your money but spare us your advice." It should mean partnership and interdependence as Africa integrates into the world system. I do not believe that Africa is different. I kept being told here before I came, particularly by African experts, that Africa was unique and different. But luckily I had worked in Asia and Europe and I'd been told that Asia was different and unique and Europe was different and unique before I got to Africa. Of course, every country is unique, every individual is unique. But the problems are not unique. I surprised my African friends when I told them this after our Security Council trip in May of last year. But when I told them that everything we were confronting in the Congo, Ethiopia-Eritrea and other parts of Africa was similar and in some cases structurally identical to problems we had faced in Europe and Asia, that wasn't a sign of disrespect. It was a sign that there are universal problems with individual and local characteristics and they must be dealt with that way.

The barriers for Africa's evolution need to be addressed frankly. If Africa and the OAU and its other organizations, like ECOWAS and SADC -- two organizations with which I've had

very close relations -- are going to take their place alongside the European Union, ASEAN, the OAS, NAFTA and other regional groups. And I believe this is possible and I believe it should be the goal for Africa.

Let me be somewhat provocative and quite honest with you. I don't think that Africa and its great people have been fully served by some of its leaders and institutions adequately. The OAU is a great institution with a great and storied history. And I have great respect and affection for my friend Salim Salim, your Secretary General. But as an organization, the Organization of African Unity, has sometimes in recent years been less than the sum of its parts. When liberation was the agenda item, the OAU was unified and made an absolutely critical and historical contribution to history. The architects of decolonization are all closely identified with the OAU, great names like Nyerere, Nasser, Nkrumah, Toure, Ben-Bella and Khama. However, if the ideology of the liberation era remains the driving force behind the OAU, as we are now in the second year of the new century, then the institution will simply become a museum of the history of African nationalism.

Now the OAU took an historic step when it decided not to seat governments that come to power via unconstitutional means. This already has had a positive impact on the situations in Cote D'Ivoire and Comoros. Could the OAU expand this to include governments that retain power by unconstitutional means, or which violate international sanctions on diamonds, or which forment civil war in their neighborhood? Rather than leaving unchallenged the prerogatives of governments to do whatever they please within their own countries, the OAU might consider taking the lead in promoting economic and political integration.

When Africa is united behind these ideals – ideals you articulate in all your declarations -- the unity is a potent force for a regional agenda. However, when Africa decides to unite in refusal to criticize one of its own, or when it automatically assumes that its agenda is indistinguishable from the Non-Aligned Movement or the G-77, unity can become an impediment. Unity can become a lowest-common-denominator façade that prevents achievement. I believe that one of the African group's great challenges as it emerges onto the world stage as a major force – and you are now a major force on the world stage – is to redefine the use of unity into an instrument for promoting and defending common democratic values.

Now, I know you would be very disappointed if I left you without one truly provocative idea so here it is. After 18 months as the American Ambassador to the United Nations I have reached a conclusion which I will share with you today, which I know will be controversial. I don't expect you to agree with it, and even if you agree with it I don't expect you to be able to say so freely in public at this point. But I hope you will debate and think about it over the coming year. And I put it to you in the framework of mutual respect among friends – and as I look around this room, I see many, many friends.

I respectfully ask the African countries here today to reconsider their association with the Non-Aligned Movement. The Non-Aligned Movement is not Africa's friend at this point. Your goals and the NAM's are not synonymous. Now, this issue has been skillfully, indeed brilliantly, modulated by the fact that in the current cycle the Non-Aligned Movement's Chairman is also the Ambassador from South Africa, my very good friend Dumisani Kumalo. And Dumisani has

done a brilliant job of modulating the issue, but on issue after issue, the NAM is operating not on behalf of Africa but on behalf of other extraneous issues. And Africa is being pulled through NAM solidarity into supporting positions which are not in Africa's interests. And it is an historical anomaly.

Now the NAM shares some of the same founders as the OAU. And all of you are familiar with its origins in Bandung in 1955 out of a storied and different era at the height of the cold war with men like Chou En Lai and Tito and Sukarno and Nkrumah and Nasser. But this is 2001 and I have not seen a single issue in which the NAM positions actually benefited the African group. You weaken your voice as the OAU, as the African group, by associating with a group that is dominated by non-African radicals with one or two African members, which doesn't represent the interests of your people, which is obsessed with other issues. The G-77 is somewhat different because the G-77 focuses on economic issues. I had my difficulties with the G-77 because some of the members of it were hardly developing nations and therefore the battle over scale of assessments in which the G-77 took the lead was often very peculiar because the G-77 position was being driven by its richest members not at the benefit of the poor members. But I understand the value of the G-77 because the resource transfer issue is a legitimate and important issue and it's one on which your efforts should not waver.

But the Non-Aligned Movement, in my view, should either cease to exist as a separate caucus, merge with the G-77 or else, you and the African group – and I recognize that this is an issue for much higher levels than most of us in this room – should consider distancing yourself from the NAM. So that you can protect African interests and not allow yourselves to be pushed by less than 10 radicalized states into positions that you don't need. Now every country in this room is a member of both groups and I know that I'm making a suggestion that is potent with meaning and history. But I'm leaving in three days and I want to give you something to argue about.

All of you who have worked with me know that the history of the last 17 months, my tenure is that I've repeatedly put forward positions that people found either offensive or provocative at the beginning, but after we've talked about them for month after month, and thought about them, we reached acceptable compromises. If I were staying here for another year, I would make the same proposal but in a quieter way. And then I'd talk to all of you until we found out whether it was feasible or not but since I can't do that I just want to let you think about it. Because your responsibility—and here I talk only to my friends from Africa, not to the non-African Ambassadors here in the room, although I see many of my closest non-African Ambassadors here—you should consider the way the other associations, and particularly the NAM, weakens your central agenda. This is your institution. Africa is the dominant force in the UN when you want it to be. So think of Africa and don't get used for other issues in other parts of the world, which are other people's battles, which are left over from the fight against colonialism, or the Cold War, or some residual radicalism left over in a few anachronistic countries.

And again, in saying all this, I want to pay tribute to Ambassador Kumalo, whose stewardship of the NAM has made this issue one which we can deal with. Had it been done differently, it could have been an even more difficult situation.

So let me conclude. I believe that Africa's security, its welfare and its freedom are ultimately as important to all of us as they are to Africa itself. The visionaries who founded the UN were people who rose above traditional thoughts of national interest and national security. They recognized that security and prosperity were global and could not exist in isolation. The representatives of the African states here in New York have always known that individually it was difficult to make their voices heard except perhaps for the four largest countries in Africa who will always get a hearing, but for the smaller countries, a collective voice was essential and the more collective it is, the more effective. In my time here at the UN, you've afforded me the singular honor of speaking to you both as individuals and as a group, and increasingly as a friend. In both cases, your message is one of faith in the UN, hope for the role of the United States, and urgency on behalf of your people.

Speaking individually, I want to assure you that I heard your message and I will continue to listen to it as I go back into private life. I intend to remain actively engaged in African issues and I look forward to a continued dialogue with any of you who wish to maintain it. I hope to continue to travel to Africa and build on the wonderful friendships that Kati and I have made within the African group among all of you as individual ambassadors and among the broader constituency of Americans who care about Africa. I hope that you will continue to think of me as part of the global constituency fighting for the priority of Africa—which is why I am speaking only to the African group and not to the other regional groups as I leave this job -- one of the growing number of Americans who understand the importance of Africa and who care about the continent, its problems and above all, its people. And above all, I hope you will continue to regard me as your friend.

Thank you very much.